

Hello,

My name is Iris Shimizu, sister of an Oregon Constituent with Developmental Disabilities, and soon to be returning Oregon Resident after short Military leave.

Everyone deserves access to healthcare and support from people they trust to help them understand their care and communicate with doctors. Today, too many people experiencing disability are not able to access healthcare, are denied support from people they trust while they are hospitalized or having end of life discussions.

I am writing to ask that Legislative Concept 52 (or “LC 52”) be introduced and passed this Special Session so that Oregonians experiencing disability can access healthcare, use support from people they trust while they are hospitalized and have support when making end of life decisions.

Without the accompaniment of a support person, my brother's hospital experience would be one that is unproductive, harmful, and potentially dangerous. For my brother, he would be consumed with emotions of confusion, panic, anxiety, and helplessness. Oftentimes to an unfamiliar person, these can be identified as negative behaviors which opens the door for them to be addressed poorly and even resulting in him not receiving adequate care. He would likely be deemed combative, refusing treatment, or even be restrained. All of which do not ultimately help him in receiving needed care. My brother is not able to communicate and therefore advocate on behalf of his concerns or needs. As a mental health community worker, I can tell you that it takes a familiar comfortable person to assist in true communication on behalf of the patient. A support person would act as a bridge of communication both in the needs of my brother, and to prepare him for potentially necessary procedures or protocol. If a support person is taken away, you are directly putting those with developmental disabilities in harm's way by not having the most useful crisis aversion resource available, and not providing person centered care.

It is critical that the term "support person" is separate from the idea that a visitor could assist the member in de-escalation or communication. There are very specific privileges and rights given to support individuals in terms of spaces they can occupy and when, in addition to crucial end of life discussions. There should be absolutely no question of the value in a support person in the life of someone with developmental disability's life. Why would we not extend support to a time when we all experience heightened emotions, difficult decision making, comfort, and needing familiarity with known tactics for coping.

Thank you for your time,

Iris Shimizu